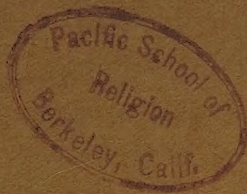


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THE BOOK OF REVELATION

BY

SHIRLEY JACKSON CASE

AN OUTLINE BIBLE-STUDY COURSE OF
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REMARKS

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FOREWORD TO THE STUDENT

The following studies are arranged in accordance with the method of other studies in the same series; namely, the assignment of a daily portion to be read and considered from various points of view. It has been the attempt of the writer of the course to give, however, in the work of each day, one connected and interesting passage, the study of which will give unity to the day's portion.

In order to carry on such a course as outlined in this book it is not absolutely necessary that the daily study arrangement shall be followed. For the completion of the course by such an arrangement, an expenditure of fifteen minutes a day ought to be sufficient. It may in many cases be more convenient to spend more time than this upon the work and at longer intervals. Those who desire, therefore, to ignore the division into daily portions may combine the selections into weekly tasks or such divisions as are most convenient to them.

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more fortunate, study in groups. It is frequently the case that work done by one's self, in earnest mood and with the help of the detailed directions for study, is more thoroughly done and productive of more lasting results than the work in groups. Persons working alone should see that their names are enrolled as members at the headquarters of THE INSTITUTE and should avail themselves of the privilege of correspondence which is thereby given to them.

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PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

The main purpose of this course of study is to explain the real meaning of the Book of Revelation. Its meaning can be made clear only by keeping constantly in mind the actual circumstances of the author and his readers. By trying to place ourselves beside them in their own world we shall be able to sympathize more truly with them in their troubles and understand better their ardent desire for Christ's early return to bring an end to the world.

Revelation has often been difficult reading for moderns because they lacked knowledge of the strenuous experiences through which the early Christians of Asia Minor were passing at the time the book was written. For a similar reason some readers have not only failed to understand the book, but have read into it fanciful notions that had no place in the thinking of the author and his companions. What is needed first of all in our study is a clear apprehension of the trying circumstances which surrounded John and his fellow-Christians, for herein is found the key to all the mysteries of this puzzling book.

Only after learning what Revelation meant to the author and its first readers shall we be in a position to estimate correctly its significance for Christians today.

OUTLINE

Study I

- I. Introduction, chap. 1.
- II. Messages to the Seven Churches, 2:1—3:22.

Study II

- III. Visions of Heaven, chaps. 4 f.
- IV. Visions from the Heavenly Book, 6:1—8:5.
- V. Visions of the Seven Angels with Trumpets, 8:6—11:19.

Study III

- VI. Visions of the Activity of Demonic Powers, chaps. 12-14.
- VII. Visions of the Seven Angels of Destruction, chaps. 15 f.
- VIII. Visions of Rome's Doom, chaps. 17 f.

Study IV

- IX. Visions of the End, chaps. 19 f.
- X. Visions of the New Heaven and the New Earth, 21:1—22:5.
- XI. Conclusion, 22:6-21.

REFERENCE BOOKS

This course may be satisfactorily studied without reference books, but for those who desire to read further the following books are suggested. The books by Dean and Scott are good brief popular commentaries. Porter gives an excellent introduction to the class of literature to which Revelation belongs, showing how Daniel, Enoch, and other books of this type arose and how they are to be studied.

J. T. Dean, *The Book of Revelation*.

C. A. Scott, "Revelation," in the *New Century Bible*.

F. C. Porter, *Messages of the Apocalyptic Writers*.

S. J. Case, *The Millennial Hope*.

STUDY I

I. INTRODUCTION

First day.—§ 1. *Persecution.* In the last decade of the first century, while Domitian was emperor of Rome, his officers in eastern Asia Minor dealt very harshly with Christians. Read 6:9 f.; 13:9 f.; 20:4, for incidental references to these terrible troubles which were pressing upon the adherents of the new faith at the time Revelation was written.

Second day.—The cause of the persecution was the Christians' refusal to take part in the worship of the emperor which was being enforced at this time in the cities of Asia Minor. Read 13:6-8, where the author condemns the blasphemy of the ruler—the "beast," as he is called—for demanding worship of his subjects.

Third Day.—In 13:11-17 the zeal of the priest—another "beast"—who officiates in the cult of the emperor is described. When Christians refuse to comply with the demands of this priest and the Roman officers who support him, they are punished with imprisonment, banishment, or death.

Fourth day.—§ 2. *The author and his situation.* Read 1:1, 4, 9. A Christian named John had been exiled or forced to flee, probably from Ephesus, to the little island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, about sixty miles southwest of Ephesus. It has usually been assumed that this individual was John the Apostle, who had been personally associated with Jesus (Mark 3:17). The author, however, makes no statement to this effect, but refers to himself merely as a "brother" who shared in the common tribulations of the Christians. See also 22:8.

Fifth day.—One Sunday, while on the lonely island of Patmos meditating upon the trials which had overtaken him and his fellow-Christians, John had a marvelous experience. He passed into a state of trance or ecstasy, which he describes as being "in the Spirit." When thus overcome by his emotions, he lost consciousness of his immediate surroundings and seemed transported to heaven, where he heard angelic voices and saw wonderful visions. He frequently refers to what he had heard or seen when he was "in the Spirit." For examples read 1:10, 12; 4:1; 5:1; 6:1; 10:1; 12:1; 15:1; 16:1; 19:1; 21:1.

Sixth day.—John sees in heaven pictorial representations which are thought to foreshadow great changes soon to take place in the history of the world. The present period of distress is soon to be followed by the complete destruction of Rome, the return of Christ in triumph, and the establishment of a new order of

things where Christians will be free from all enemies. These visions greatly strengthened John's own powers of endurance, and he sought to encourage his suffering friends by giving them a vivid description of what he had seen. For indications of this practical purpose of the author, read 1:3, 11, 19; 7:3-17; 10:8-11; 22:6 f.

Seventh day.—§ 3. *Title of the book.* Since John conveyed to his readers the pictures which had been revealed to him in his visions, his book has been called the Revelation; or sometimes, using the original Greek title, the Apocalypse. For the title-page of the book read 1:1-3. This is longer than are most titles of modern works, but it describes very adequately the nature and the purpose of the document.

Eighth day.—§ 4. *The author's introduction.* Read 1:4, 5a. Both on his own account, and in the name of the heavenly beings from whom he has received his message, John greets the principal churches of Asia Minor. Before narrating his visions about the approaching end of the world, he writes to these leading Christian communities admonishing them to live properly in order that they may be ready for the end when it comes.

Ninth day.—Read 1:5b, 6. Christ is singled out as especially worthy of praise because of his twofold work. First, by his work upon earth he is said to have procured release from sin for his followers; and, secondly, they are destined for membership in a new kingdom which he will fully establish when he returns.

Tenth day.—Read 1:7 f., which express the central theme of the whole book. Christ is coming in visible form upon the clouds, and all the peoples of the earth shall mourn at the desolation which he works upon them because they have been hostile to him. The coming of Christ will also be the coming of God Almighty, who holds all things in his power. As symbolic of his comprehensiveness he is called the "Alpha" and the "Omega," these being the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. This expectation of an early reversal of present conditions, through the intervention of Christ and God, is uppermost in the author's mind throughout the entire book.

Eleventh day.—§ 5. *The author's equipment.* Read 1:9-11. For a description of John's situation see § 2 above. As a result of his ecstatic experience he believes himself to be in possession of superior knowledge which he has been commanded to communicate to the churches. In ancient times it was not uncommon for religious persons of mystical temperament to have experiences which seemed to transport them to heaven, where they learned divine wisdom which they disclosed to their less highly favored brethren.

Twelfth day.—In order to make his claim for unique equipment stand out still more clearly, in 1:12-16 John describes with some detail the figure of Christ which he saw up in heaven. There the seven churches were represented by seven

golden candlesticks, or lampstands, and the glorified Christ was walking about in their midst. In his right hand he held seven stars, which represented the guardian angels of the several churches. This way of thinking would not have seemed strange to that ancient world, where earthly things were so often thought to have heavenly counterparts, and where men were accustomed to describe God and heaven in extravagant materialistic terms.

Thirteenth day.—To add further to John's equipment, in 1:17-20 he reported the very words which he had heard in his vision. These convince him of the supreme power of Christ and enjoin upon him the duty of writing his book. He is to do three things, namely, (1) to describe the visions which he has seen, (2) to interpret their bearing upon the present state of affairs, and (3) to deduce from them information about the future.

II. MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

Fourteenth day.—§ 6. *Message to Ephesus.* Read 2:1-3, in which the Ephesians are praised for their faithfulness. The communication is addressed to "the angel of the church," that is, to the guardian spirit, who is ever ready to guide the community in the true way. But John thinks of himself as especially chosen to convey Christ's message to the church, even though the guardian angel, represented by one of the stars in the hand of Christ, might easily have obtained the information independently. Ephesus was the chief city of Asia Minor at this time, and evidently the author was gratified to be able to speak in so complimentary a manner of this church's fidelity.

Fifteenth day.—But even the Christians in Ephesus need to be reproved and warned. Read 2:4-7. Their earlier enthusiasm has cooled somewhat, and unless they repent of this laxity the candlestick in heaven which stands for the Ephesian church will be removed, which is a figurative way of saying that Christ will disinherit this church. Hence John issues his solemn warning as if the words had been actually spoken by the Spirit (vs. 7). Since he felt himself to be "in the Spirit" (1:10) when he had his vision, he did not hesitate to ascribe his message to the Spirit, or to Christ, or even to God.

Sixteenth day.—§ 7. *Message to Smyrna.* Read 2:8 f. The Christians at Smyrna had suffered especially severe afflictions. They were poor in worldly goods, but their severest trials seem to have been caused by the Jews of the city. Persons from the Jewish synagogue could easily make trouble for the Christians by informing the civil authorities that certain persons believed in Christ and would, if put to the test, refuse to worship the emperor. Jews were excused from this requirement on the ground of their nationality. But Christians who had broken with Judaism or converts from among the Gentiles were shown no special favors. Recalling the troubles which Christians had suffered from the Jews of Smyrna, John bitterly refers to them as "a synagogue of Satan."

Seventeenth day.—Read 2:10 f. Still greater sufferings are thought to hang over the Smyrneans, but they are encouraged to be faithful by the promise of a glorious heavenly reward. Even if the Roman authorities put them to death, they will at once be given a place of honor in heaven, and in the day of the final judgment, when their bodies are to be restored, they will escape the “second death,” which will come upon all sinners at that time (see 20:4-6, 11-15).

Eighteenth day.—§ 8. *Message to Pergamum.* Read 2:12 f. Pergamum was the chief center of emperor-worship in Asia, and so John calls it the place where Satan’s throne is located, and the place “where Satan dwelleth.” Here a Christian named Antipas had recently been put to death for refusing to worship the emperor. The manner of dealing with a Christian suspect was to bring him into the presence of the ruler’s image, demanding that he offer incense and say “Caesar is Lord.” Undoubtedly Antipas had remained loyal to the name of Christ, affirming that he alone was “Lord,” and this loyalty cost Antipas his life.

Nineteenth day.—Read 2:14 f. In spite of the loyalty of Antipas, there were certain persons in the church at Pergamum of whom John heartily disapproved. They, like Balaam, mentioned in Num. 31:16, were trying to lead the faithful astray. It was always a great temptation for the converted gentile Christian to attend the joyous heathen feasts, and certain Christians in Pergamum maintained that they might justly avail themselves of this privilege. For a similar situation in Corinth read I Cor., chap. 8. Another obscure group of people, known as Nicolaitans, who had been rejected by the Christians of Ephesus (2:6), had also gained a footing in Pergamum. John does not say in what respect they offend him, but probably it was their readiness to be friendly with the heathen.

Twentieth day.—Read 2:16 f. The laxities in Pergamum are upbraided with the threat of destruction when Christ comes suddenly, as he will, to utter his words of destruction upon all sinners. The wise man will give heed to this warning, and so make sure of his safety in the day of judgment. The reward is pictured very realistically in material terms, as is the custom with the writer of this book. The saved are to partake of a new kind of manna—the legendary food of the Hebrews in the wilderness (Exod. 16:31 ff.)—and are to receive a new name for use in the new world which Christ is expected to set up presently when he returns in judgment.

Twenty-first day.—§ 9. *Message to Thyatira.* Read 2:18 f. The members of this Christian group are praised for their persistent fidelity in good works. They have exhibited the important virtues of love, which was essential to the success of their relations with one another; they also maintained their faith in God, trusting him to bring their troubles to a speedy close; they were faithful in ministering to the wants of their needy brethren, and patiently endured their own sufferings. Their conduct is especially praiseworthy because their efforts

had not slackened when their first enthusiasm had passed; on the contrary, their zeal only increased with the increase of affliction.

Twenty-second day.—Read 2:20-23. Notwithstanding his fulsome praise for the Christians of Thyatira, the author must call them to account for one very serious defect. There is a certain prophetess in the community whose conduct is very offensive to him. It was not uncommon in the Mediterranean world of that day for certain women to be regarded as unique mediums through whom the gods made revelations to mankind. This idea passed over into Christianity, and the church at Thyatira has such a person in its midst. She advocates a more liberal attitude toward the heathen than John can approve, and in his indignation he charges her with acts of gross immorality and threatens her with severe punishment unless she repents.

Twenty-third day.—Read 2:24-29. The only injunction laid upon the church at Thyatira is to purge itself of this false leadership represented by the prophetess Jezebel. Her teachings purported to give a deeper knowledge than that possessed by the ordinary man, but to John this was a knowledge, not of God, but of "the deep things of Satan." Those who endure in good works until the end, now so near, will be amply rewarded for their fidelity. The heathen now lord it over believers, but in the approaching day of Christ's triumph the tables will be turned and Gentiles shall feel the iron rod wielded by Christians.

Twenty-fourth day.—§ 10. *Message to Sardis.* Read 3:1-3. This church is regarded as being in a very precarious condition. It bears the name of the living Christ, but its vital activities have almost completely ceased. The spark of life remaining may be fanned into flame if it is diligently tended. The members must recall the Christian teaching which has previously been given to them and renew their activities. Otherwise the impending day of judgment will fall upon them suddenly, leaving them no further opportunity to procure a share in the blessings of the new kingdom.

Twenty-fifth day.—Read 3:4-6. Although the church at Sardis is thought as a whole to be in a wretched condition, a few of its members have remained faithful, and they are not to be deprived of their merited reward. The promise is again depicted in materialistic imagery. In the new kingdom these individuals will be made conspicuous for their piety by being clothed in white robes. The impending doom of sinners need cause them no personal anxiety, since their names will be presented by Christ to God himself in the presence of the angels. Under these circumstances there is no danger that they will be overlooked or forgotten.

Twenty-sixth day.—§ 11. *Message to Philadelphia.* Read 3:7-9. The Philadelphian church had been given some special opportunity to display its fidelity and had proved equal to the task. Perhaps they had been particularly diligent in making the new religion known to others, and in time of persecution they did not deny Christ. This example of faithfulness was all the more note-

worthy because of the lowly social status of these Christians. As their reward "the synagogue of Satan" (see § 7)—their Jewish persecutors—will be humbled before them on the day of Christ's appearing to reverse present conditions and establish persecuted believers in authority upon the earth.

Twenty-seventh day.—Read 3:10-13. As a present reward for their past endurance the Christians of Philadelphia are promised that the darker days yet to come shall not overwhelm them. John believes that worse sufferings are yet in store for the faithful, because the forces of evil will make a terrific onslaught in the last days. But Christians are urged to remain steadfast in view of the speedy approach of the end. Christ is coming quickly, and then the faithful shall receive crowns and be given positions of great honor in the new Jerusalem, which is to be let down from heaven upon the site where the Jewish city had stood. This hope for a speedy end of the world did much to support the early Christians in times of persecution.

Twenty-eighth day.—§ 12. *Message to Laodicea.* Read 3:14-17. John thinks that the church at Laodicea is in a particularly deplorable condition. Its members are prosperous and self-sufficient. Apparently they are so well established socially that they are able to avert those troubles which have overtaken their less fortunate brethren in other Asiatic cities. Their easy-going ways cause the author to upbraid them severely. God will reject them because they are not ardently resisting their heathen environment; nor will their worldly prosperity avail them anything with God. Since they are devoid of good works, they are poor, blind, and naked in the sight of God.

Twenty-ninth day.—Read 3:18-22. There is but one way of escape for the indifferent Christians of Laodicea. They must seek suffering in order that they may become as gold refined by the fire, clothing themselves in the white robes of the true saints and preparing their eyes to see what really lies before them. They are told that their present ease is evidence that God does not favor them, for whom he loves he chastens. This was a natural feeling for John to have, in view of his own severe distress coupled with his confidence in God. The Laodiceans must make haste to repent, for the return of Christ is so imminent that even now he stands at the door ready to greet those who receive him and to give them a place of honor in the new kingdom.

Thirtieth day.—§ 13. *Questions for consideration.* What historical preparation does one need for the correct understanding of the Book of Revelation? What was the situation of the author? What sort of religious experience did he have before writing? What is the main theme of the book? How did John describe his equipment for writing this book? How did he account for the present sufferings of Christians? What help did he derive from his belief in the speedy return of Christ? Did Christianity conquer the ancient world in the sudden cataclysmic manner that John expected it would? Might faith in the triumphant power of

God be expressed in a different way? Is early Christianity any less significant because God chose to work by a more gradual process of victory?

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Give the approximate date of the writing of the Book of Revelation.
2. Describe conditions in the Roman Empire which are reflected in the book.
3. What in particular brought the Christians into disfavor with the emperor?
4. What can you say concerning the author of the book and his purpose in writing it?
5. What knowledge is necessary to an understanding of it?
6. What is the great theme or promise of the book?
7. What authority did John claim for his message?
8. Give the purport of the message to the Christians at Ephesus.
9. What was the trouble in the church at Smyrna, and how are its members comforted by John?
10. What had happened at Pergamum?
11. What is John's rebuke to this church?
12. For what conduct does the author praise the church at Thyatira?
13. With what injunction does John accompany his praise?
14. With what hope does he encourage the despondent Christians of Sardis and Philadelphia?
15. In what terms does he describe the Laodicean and why?
16. Were the feelings of all these churches natural under the circumstances or exceptional?
17. Did Christianity conquer the ancient world in the sudden manner that John expected it would?
18. Do you think that if John had been accustomed to the idea of evolution in history and the slow development of thought that he would have so confidently comforted his friends with the promise of the speedy return of Jesus?
19. Is early Christianity any less significant because God chose to work by a more gradual process of victory?

STUDY II

III. VISIONS OF HEAVEN

First day.—§ 14. *Heavenly glory of God.* Read 4:1-4. Having previously admonished the principal churches of Asia Minor to purify themselves in preparation for the speedy coming of Christ* (§§ 6-12), John now proceeds to assure his readers that God and Christ together will presently execute a mighty judgment upon the Roman Empire, at the same time destroying Satan and all his hosts. John's method of encouraging his readers to expect this glorious deliverance is to paint vivid pictures of coming events as he has beheld them in the ecstasy of vision. First, he describes the majesty of God in heaven. God is represented as sitting upon a throne, and his appearance is more beautiful than that of a rainbow ornamented with precious stones. He is surrounded by twenty-four royal subordinates, also seated upon thrones and wearing golden crowns. This imagery is well calculated to persuade the reader that God and his heavenly associates represent an imperial authority vastly more powerful than that of the Romans.

Second day.—Read 4:5-8 for further details in the picture of God's heavenly glory. The ferribleness of God is suggested by the lightnings, voices, and thunders that proceed from his throne. Seven spirits stand ready to do his bidding, and the presence of four monstrous creatures adds to the terrors of the scene. These indescribable beings perpetually declare the eternal holiness and power of God "who is and who is to come."

Third day.—Read 4:9-11. The twenty-four heavenly kings also acknowledge the supremacy and illimitable power of God. In contrast with the Roman emperor, who sets himself up as the deity demanding worship from men, these princes prostrate themselves before the God of heaven. Since he has created all things, he is lord of all and is the only rightful possessor of glory, honor, and power. This must have been an exceedingly comforting thought to Christians enduring persecution, because they refused to worship the emperor whose glory, honor, and power seemed temporarily so overwhelming.

Fourth day.—§ 15. *Heavenly glory of Christ.* Read 5:1-5. As a further means of strengthening the confidence of his readers, in the next place John pictures the heavenly dignity of Christ, whose speedy return is to bring deliverance for Christians. God is represented as holding in his hand a wonderful book-roll

so constructed that it could not be completely unrolled until each of its seven seals had been broken. The contents of the book are unknown because God awaited the appearing of someone able to break the magic seals. In his vision the seer weeps at his inability to peer into this roll containing the secrets of the future, but presently he is comforted with the assurance that the risen Christ possesses the power necessary to break the seals, thereby revealing the future to John, who communicates this new information to his readers.

Fifth day.—Read 5:6-10. Christ's appearing upon the scene is the occasion for introducing special details in the picture of heaven. Standing in the midst of the royal court, he is portrayed as a marvelous creature resembling a lamb. When he takes the magic book out of God's hand the dignitaries of heaven do obeisance to him in recognition of his power, even as they had previously acknowledged the power of God (4:9-11). Christ is thus honored because of his faithfulness while on earth, and there remains upon earth a group of his followers whom he has destined for a royal rule, notwithstanding their present condition of affliction.

Sixth day.—Read 5:11-14. The author cannot dismiss his description of the heavenly powers without a concluding declaration that the might of God and of Christ is sure to triumph. The entire angelic host joins the members of the royal court in heralding the praises of Christ, who is worthy to receive all power and glory, in spite of the fact that his earthly career had ended in death at the hands of the Romans. In the final outburst of praise the whole creation unites to acknowledge the complete and eternal supremacy of God and Christ together. As John held this portrait of the heavenly powers before the eyes of his fellow-sufferers, doubtless many of them were induced to share his confidence in the speedy overthrow of hostile Roman rule.

IV. VISIONS FROM THE HEAVENLY BOOK

Seventh day.—§ 16. *Pictures of impending calamities.* Read 6:1, 2. In his vision John had been privileged to peer into the secrets of heaven. As one by one the seven seals of the heavenly book were broken, he saw as in a great picture book images of events to take place in the future when the end of the present world draws near. The first picture seen is that of a white horse and its crowned rider equipped with a bow and accoutered for victory—symbolic of impending wars to presage the downfall of the Roman Empire. Probably John has in mind a possible invasion of the Parthians, or other dreaded enemies from the East, who would throw themselves furiously against Rome, their temporary triumph being prophetic of the ultimate destruction of the empire by Christ.

Eighth day.—Read 6:3, 4. The breaking of the second seal discloses another picture of coming disaster. The rider upon a red horse is a still more vivid symbol of the wars which are expected to rend the empire. This is a scene of bloodshed typified by the sword as the characteristic weapon of destruction in ancient times.

Peace would be removed from the earth and wholesale slaughter would ensue. Then the Romans themselves would suffer the same agonies which they at present were inflicting upon the Christians.

Ninth day.—Read 6:5, 6. The picture revealed with the breaking of the third seal symbolizes famine, another of the preliminary distresses to overtake the Romans as the end draws near. The rider upon the black horse carries a pair of scales for weighing out bread when food will become so scarce in the empire that one measure of wheat—the usual amount of the workingman's daily ration—will increase twelve times its normal price; even the price of coarser barley bread will similarly increase. But the luxuries, oil and wine, will be unharmed, thereby permitting the wealthy to revel in their pleasures, while the more substantial staple articles of food perish.

Tenth day.—Read 6:7, 8. Still another image of approaching doom is disclosed when the fourth seal is broken. This time the color of the horse resembles that of a corpse, and its rider is the personification of death accompanied by a personification of the powers of the lower world. These destructive powers, having been let loose upon the Roman Empire, will employ various devices for accomplishing the death of one-quarter of the population. Many persons will fall in battle, others will die of hunger, deadly pestilence will carry away others, and still others will be devoured by ferocious beasts.

Eleventh day.—Read 6:9-11. In speaking of death, John is reminded that Christians, who have already been overtaken by this calamity, are to suffer further persecutions. But the opening of the fifth seal exhibits a comforting picture for the persecuted. The Christian martyrs have not been carried off to Hades. On the contrary, their souls are seen stored in a special place in heaven where they cry to God for vengeance upon their Roman persecutors. The seer learns that the period of suffering is to continue "yet for a little time," until others of the faithful have been given a full opportunity to attain to the glories of martyrdom. Looking upon this picture of the reward awaiting them in heaven, Christians were encouraged to endure with equanimity their part in the calamities of those trying days.

Twelfth day.—Read 6:12-17. The next picture exhibits certain terrors in nature to occur with the approach of the world's end. Here John follows in the footsteps of his Jewish and Christian predecessors, who drew their imagery from terrifying natural phenomena. See Isa. 2:10 f., 19, 21; Joel 2:30 f.; Mark 13:24 f. The day of final agony is portrayed in terms of the complete collapse of the present powers of nature, thus surely involving the utter downfall of the Roman Empire. In those ancient days the sky was thought to be a bell-shaped partition shutting off heaven from earth. When this partition is removed men are filled with terror at seeing God looking directly down upon them, and they seek to hide themselves in the caves of the earth. The terrified persons who

stand out especially in John's vision are the characteristic classes of Roman society: kings, princes, military officers, the rich, the powerful, slaves, and freemen.

Thirteenth day.—§ 17. *Safety of the saints.* Read 7:1-8. Following the portrayal of dire calamities, another picture appears, guaranteeing the safety of the saints. Adhering to the current notion that the winds are controlled by special supernatural powers, John pictures four angels restraining the fury of the winds, while another angel in this season of calm places the stamp of God upon the foreheads of the saints. The first group is to be selected from the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, 12,000 from each tribe. These are to survive the calamities of the age and be given a place of final refuge in heaven.

Fourteenth day.—Read 7:9-12. The rescue of 144,000 saints from among the Jews represents but a part of the total number to be saved. In the same picture John sees an innumerable multitude rescued from among Gentiles of every nationality. Clothed in white robes and carrying palms in their hands, this company of the redeemed are portrayed in the act of rendering praise to God and to Christ for effecting their salvation. The angels join in the chorus, making special declaration of the almighty glory and power of God, who is the ultimate source of salvation. The readers of the book, as they gaze upon this picture, would surely gather new strength for resisting the tortures of persecution.

Fifteenth day.—Read 7:13-17. Not content with the assuring imagery already exhibited, John sketches a further scene, revealing more explicitly the identity of the white-robed saints in his picture. One of the heavenly dignitaries definitely announces that these persons are the faithful, who have passed successfully through the period of excessive suffering immediately to precede the destruction of the Roman Empire and the end of the world, which have been described in chap. 6. The privileges of these saints in heaven are portrayed in glowing imagery. They dwell in the very presence of God, receiving constantly his protection, and Christ devotes himself especially to their care.

Sixteenth day.—Read 8:1-5. The breaking of the seventh and last seal of the heavenly book discloses more in detail the tragic events connected with the last times. But before proceeding to the description of these terrors, John has still another word of assurance for the faithful. While the hosts of heaven await in awful silence for half an hour the staging of the final scene in the great drama of destruction, an angel appears with a golden vessel full of incense symbolizing the prayers of the saints. Heaven is represented as equipped with altars for sacrifice, as was the temple inclosure in Jerusalem. When the incense is burned the prayers of the saints ascend in pleasing fragrance before God. In contrast with this evidence of divine favor for afflicted Christians, another act of the angel is expressive of divine wrath upon the enemies of Christians. When the angel is seen taking fire from the altar and casting it upon the earth the silence of heaven

is broken by thunders, voices, lightnings, and the rumble of the earthquake. Thus the enactment of the final scene is begun.

V. VISIONS OF THE SEVEN ANGELS WITH TRUMPETS

Seventeenth day.—§ 18. *Preliminary afflictions.* Read 8:6, 7. When the last seal of the heavenly book was removed, John saw seven angels with trumpets (8:2). Now they are seen prepared to give the signal for successive deeds of destruction to be visited upon mortals. With the blowing of the first trumpet a preliminary affliction falls upon earth in the form of a destructive hailstorm accompanied by livid flashes of blood-red lightning. So severe is this storm that one-third of all the trees are destroyed along with all green grass.

Eighteenth day.—Read 8:8, 9. When the second angel gives his signal new afflictions are seen to smite the earth. An uprooted volcano is cast into the sea, and its bloody flames not only kill a third part of all creatures living in the sea, but also destroy one-third of the shipping of the world. As the wealth and happiness of Rome were largely dependent upon the commerce of the Mediterranean, this event would constitute a serious blow to the power of the empire.

Nineteenth day.—Read 8:10, 11. At a signal from the third angel one-third of all rivers and springs are smitten by a falling star which renders the waters both bitter and poisonous. As a result of drinking these poisoned waters, many human beings perish.

Twentieth day.—Read 8:12, 13. The last of these milder forms of affliction occurs when the fourth angel blows his trumpet. Thereupon the luminaries of both day and night are diminished by one-third. But much greater distresses are to follow in three successive seasons of woe. John sees the picture of a flying eagle possessing powers of speech and announcing that each of the remaining three angelic trumpeters will call forth demonstrations of more woeful afflictions as the climax of the scene is reached.

Twenty-first day.—§ 19. *The first woe.* Read 9:1-6. At the blowing of the fifth trumpet a star falls to the earth. It was a custom among the ancients to personify the stars. This supernatural astral being possesses the key to the great chasm beneath the earth where all sorts of terrors are supposed to be located. When this awful chasm is unlocked John sees the atmosphere filled with black smoke. This smoke breeds pestilential creatures resembling locusts or scorpions. But these new pests, instead of destroying vegetation as locusts usually do, direct their harmful activities toward human beings. But Christians were to have no fear, since the locusts were definitely instructed to spare all persons marked by the seal of God (7:3). All others were to be smitten, not by death, lest they escape their fate too quickly, but by sore affliction for a period of five months.

Twenty-second day.—Read 9:7-12. In order to increase the picture of terror John adds a fanciful description of the creatures that have been released from the

abyss. They are horse-shaped creatures having human heads, long hair, and lions' teeth. Their bodies are covered with scales like breastplates, and they fly with wings that make a terrific noise. Their serpent-like tails containing stings at the end are the instruments with which they torture mortals. This destructive host is led by a superior demon, himself the very personification of destruction. Such mythological figures were not unusual in the thinking of that ancient world.

Twenty-third day.—§ 20. *The second woe.* Read 9:13-17. Especial preparations have been made for the loosing of the third woe as depicted by John. The sixth trumpeting angel was instructed to liberate four angels who had been chained down near the river Euphrates. Here they had been kept in waiting for the moment when they were to assemble a mighty host of cavalry 200,000,000 strong to overrun the Roman Empire. Nor are these mere ordinary horsemen. They are to be equipped with breastplates flashing like fire and are to ride upon horses having lions' heads and exhaling fire, smoke, and brimstone.

Twenty-fourth day.—Read 9:18-21. It was to be expected that so terrible a scourge would prove very deadly. As a result, one-third of the earth's inhabitants die, slain by the fire, smoke, and brimstone exhaled by the horses. The horses all have serpent-like tails with which they injure men. This terrifying demonstration seems to have been designed to effect the repentance of surviving Gentiles, who should see in this affliction a punishment for their previous refusal to adopt Christianity. But John does not look for any general repentance even under these circumstances. He expects the heathen peoples of the Roman Empire to continue until the end in their idolatrous and sinful ways.

Twenty-fifth day.—Read 10:1-7. Before passing on to describe the last woe John introduces a few supplementary pictures sketching more fully certain details of the program. In the first place, he reaffirms his authority to depict these details by describing at this point a new experience of his own. He seems to be back upon earth again, where he witnesses the descent of a mighty angel who stands with one foot upon the sea and the other upon the dry land. The utterance of the angel stirs up the voice of the thunders, here represented as supernatural persons using intelligible speech. Apparently their words referred to approaching doom, but John did not feel at liberty to repeat their language. That these secrets are presently to be disclosed is solemnly affirmed by the angel, but this revelation is not to be made until the seventh trumpet is blown. Then the events of the end will be revealed, disclosing to the righteous the mystery of God as already foreshadowed in the writings of the prophets.

Twenty-sixth day.—Read 10:8-11. John believes that he is the divinely chosen medium of this final revelation. He supports this contention by relating that in his vision he had received and eaten a book from the angel's hand. This reception of divine wisdom was a pleasant experience; the book was like honey in John's mouth. But it grew less pleasing as he reflected upon the sufferings to

be endured by the Christians in the last days. Nevertheless, he now feels himself fully equipped to disclose the particulars regarding the final judgment which God is about to pronounce upon the hostile heathen.

Twenty-seventh day.—Read 11:1 f. John lingers a few moments longer upon a picture of events to take place before the third and final woe is introduced by the blowing of the seventh trumpet. He has been instructed in his vision to take the measurements of the Jerusalem temple with the altar and inner court, but not to measure the outer court to which Gentiles were usually admitted. In the new scheme of things no provision is to be made for Gentiles, since all those who have not accepted Christianity will have perished. But the measurements of the more sacred precincts are to be preserved for future restoration. In the meantime the Gentiles will devastate the holy city for a period of three and a half years before the advent of the final woe. Apparently John took these numbers from some such source as Dan. 7:25; 12:7.

Twenty-eighth day. Read 11:3-7. Another phenomenal event of the last days seen by John in his vision is the appearance upon earth of two heavenly personages sent especially to preach with reference to the coming disaster. For a period of 1,260 days—again three and a half years in ancient reckoning—they are miraculously preserved from the enmity of the heathen against whom they prophesy. Their power to prevent rain, to turn water into blood, and to smite the earth with plagues implies that John identifies these heavenly beings with Elijah and Moses, who had performed similar feats when previously upon earth (I Kings 17:1; Exod. 7:20). When their appointed task is finished they will be slain by a monster ascending from the abyss which had previously been opened to let loose demonic powers to work evil in the last times (9:2).

Twenty-ninth day.—Read 11:8-14. Temporarily the triumph of evil seems complete. For three and a half days the bodies of the slain prophets are seen lying unburied in the streets of Jerusalem, the city where Jesus had been crucified. During this time the heathen rejoice in what they imagine to be their victory over the prophets who have spoken evil things against the pagan world. But this rejoicing is soon turned into fear as the slain witnesses suddenly come to life and ascend to heaven. Then follows a fearful earthquake, causing the death of 7,000 people and striking terror into the hearts of the survivors. After a long digression John is now ready to depict the final scene to follow the blowing of the seventh trumpet. The third and last woe "cometh quickly."

Thirtieth day.—§ 21. *The third woe.* Read 11:15-19. The first picture seen after the seventh angel sounds his trumpet is a grand exhibition of triumph in which heavenly voices declare the complete and everlasting victory of Christ. The heavenly court likewise announces the final triumph of God Almighty over all heathen foes, when judgment is executed upon the nations and the saints are rewarded for their faithfulness. The heavenly temple is also exhibited, and

terrible noises accompanied by a storm of hail prepare the way for final catastrophe. In the remainder of the book John produces several striking pictures, sometimes giving elaborate details of incidents to attend the ultimate establishment of God's triumph over the hostile powers under whom Christians are at present suffering.

Thirty-first day.—§ 22. *Summary.* Read rapidly through chaps. 4-11. Certain characteristics of this portion of the Book of Revelation are worthy of special note: (1) Observe that the author's pedagogical method is to teach by appealing to the imagination of his readers with pictures instead of trying to produce conviction by means of formal argument. (2) In presenting his pictures John has a very definite end in view. By first exhibiting the heavenly majesty of God and Christ in chaps. 4 f., the afflicted readers are induced to believe that they may confidently rely upon divine help to deliver them from their troubles. Then in a further series of pictures their imagination is stimulated to anticipate a line of imminent events rapidly leading up to the final woe, which will mean the complete triumph of God and the utter destruction of their enemies. (3) John sometimes draws imagery for the details of his pictures from the Old Testament and later Jewish apocalypses, such as the Book of Enoch, which abounds in descriptions of angels and other heavenly scenery. (4) John's own frame of mind is that of the religious enthusiast who is able to fuse existing imagery with the new creations of his own genius, as he endeavors to portray the future anew in the light of recent events brought on by the persecution of the Christians at the hands of the Romans.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Describe the vision of God and heaven with which John opens the second portion of his book.
2. Why did his visions of the future take the imagery of thrones and kings and empires?
3. Name such qualities of God represented in these pictures as would be particularly comforting to the first readers of this book.
4. What office in the picture of heaven does John ascribe to Christ, and how does his figure reflect the Judaistic sacrificial system?
5. What was probably the result of these triumphant visions upon the early Christians?
6. Have they a message also for us? If so, what is it?
7. Through what figures does John present the calamities which he believes must come before the Roman government can be overthrown?
8. How is nature to assist in the final downfall of the persecutors of the Christians?
9. What conception of the physical relation of earth and heaven underlies this picture of earthly destruction?

10. Where meanwhile were the Christians who had already suffered martyrdom supposed to be?

11. How was the safety of those Christians who were yet living on the earth to be assured?

12. Why do vss. 13 to 18 of chap. 7 convey comfort to all suffering Christians as well as to those for whom the book was written?

13. With what reassuring picture does the author introduce the visions of destruction represented by the angels with the trumpets?

14. What was accomplished by the first five angels?

15. What does the purpose of the sixth angel suggest as to the attitude of the Christians toward the gentile world?

16. With what vision does John seek to establish confidence in the minds of his hearers as to his authority to speak his message?

17. How does the message of the seventh angel compensate for the preceding terrors and give a happy climax?

18. Are people who are in great affliction likely to be affected more by appeals to reason or to the emotions?

19. Suppose that John had pictured the final triumphs without the disasters preceding it. What would have been the effect upon his hearers?

20. (a) Would a deeply religious man of today use such imagery as John used?

b) If not, why not?

c) Does our own environment furnish other means of inspiring religious confidence?

d) Name an example.

STUDY III

VI. VISIONS OF THE ACTIVITY OF DEMONIC POWERS

First day.—§ 23. *Conflict in the heavens.* Read 12:1-4. Thus far John has given a somewhat general description of the woes which seem to him to threaten the wicked Roman world. He now portrays more in detail the later stages of the conflict to issue in the complete downfall of Rome. As he pictures the struggle, it is not simply a strife between Christians and the Roman authorities. Ultimately it is a conflict between Satanic forces on the one hand and angelic powers on the other, the earth being merely the scene where the last battle is staged. First there is trouble in the heavens due to the activities of the great dragon. It was customary among the ancients to think of the starry heavens as the dwelling-place of wonderful or monstrous creatures, such as John here describes. In his vision he sees in the sky a magnificently adorned woman and over against her a hideous evil monster ready to devour the child to which she is about to give birth.

Second day.—Read 12:5 f. This picture is very reassuring to John. The woman's child when born is caught up to heaven away from the power of the dragon. In heaven the child is enthroned and designated as the deliverer who is presently to lead the angelic host in triumph over the heathen nations. Having given birth to this future hero, the astral woman disappears from the heavens into a remote dwelling-place prepared for her upon earth by God. Here she awaits the end which is to come in 1,260 days, that is, three and a half years in ancient reckoning. This is the length of the final period of tribulation elsewhere referred to by John (11:2 f.; 12:14; 13:5). The figures were probably derived from Dan. 7:25; 12:7.

Third day.—Read 12:7-12. The dragon's power in the heavens is now brought to an end. Defeated by the angelic host, he must now relinquish his activities in the sky and confine his efforts to the earth. This fact means increased suffering for those who dwell upon the earth, for the dragon typifies all the forces of evil which have ever been associated with the terms "old serpent," "Devil," "Satan," and "deceiver." The devil and his angels now devote themselves especially to the torture of mortals, thus inaugurating the final period of tribulation. But John's faith offsets these agonies with the assurance that the day of

ultimate victory is at hand. For a brief period Satan may rage upon the earth, but having been cast down from the heavens his complete overthrow in the near future is certain. This assurance is doubly strong for John because it has come to him in his vision as a direct declaration from heaven. The heavenly voice rejoices that the demons have been rejected from the regions above the earth, even though earth and sea must as a result suffer greater woes. But Christians should not lose courage, for even the devil himself knows that "he hath but a short time" even for his earthly activities.

Fourth day.—Read 12:13—13:1a. John concludes his picture of the dragon's conflict with the heavenly powers by picturing a final attack upon the heavenly mother as she flees away to the place where she is to remain for three years and a half (12:6). Incensed by the failure of his pursuit, he returns to wreak his vengeance upon Christians, whom John pictorially designates as the earthly representatives of the heavenly mother.

Fifth day.—§ 24. *Activity of the "beasts."* Read 13:1b-5. The dragon's activities upon earth are performed through the agency of a terrible beast typifying the power of Rome. Like the fabled monsters of antiquity, this animal is pictured as a composite creature combining the horrible qualities of different ferocious beasts. This figure as seen by John in his vision is the very incarnation of evil, his supreme iniquity being a demand for worship. This feature identifies him with the power of Rome and its emperor who received worship from his subjects, thus blasphemously elevating himself to the position of God. But in rendering him worship his terrified subjects were in reality worshipping the dragon, that is, Satan. John thinks this state of affairs will continue three and a half years—again using the traditional figures for the duration of the last tribulations.

Sixth day.—Read 13:6-10. Temporarily God permitted the beast to exercise his power unhindered. He extended his sway all about the Mediterranean, which was the whole world for the people of that day. All peoples worshiped him except the Christians, who were persecuted for their refusal. But they are encouraged to endure patiently these afflictions, confident that their names alone are written in the heavenly book of life and that the days of violence will presently come to an end. In patience and faith the saints rest secure.

Seventh day.—Read 13:11-15. John pictures a second beast less terrible than the first, but also representing the dragon. He symbolizes the zealous priest who had charge of the rites of emperor-worship. He strikes awe into the people by working marvels in their presence, even seeming to make the image of the emperor give forth audible utterances. The authority of this official was so great that he could put to death all who refused to participate in the rites of the imperial cult.

Eighth day.—Read 13:16-18. The situation which John has in mind is very distressing. The zeal of the officials will be so great that everybody in all circles

of society will be forced to observe the imperial rites. Indeed, no one will be permitted to engage in ordinary trade without a license indicating that he has taken the oath of religious allegiance to the emperor. The license number suggests to John's imagination a bit of cryptic wisdom. Who is the individual to become this final exponent of wickedness at the head of the Roman Empire? The answer was not far to seek. The worst emperor whom history had known had been Nero, hence Nero returned to life would become the final incarnation of wickedness and the bestial representative of Satan upon earth. Instead of explicitly mentioning Nero, John veils his answer, and heightens its impressiveness, by using the number 666 obtained from a summation of the numerical values of the letters making up the name "Nero Caesar." The cumbersome practice of using letters (instead of our Arabic numbers) for numerals was common in the ancient world, and has survived to modern times in our so-called Roman numerals.

Ninth day.—§ 25. *Doom of the demonic powers.* Read 14:1-5. Over against the foregoing picture of the final outburst of demonic activity John next presents pictures suggesting to the faithful the impending reversal of conditions. Mention is again made of the 144,000 to be saved from Israel (7:4) who have kept themselves pure. John portrays their heavenly triumph in glowing colors as they appear upon the canvas singing an exclusive hymn of praise to God. Thus their victory over all Satanic foes is assured.

Tenth day.—Read 14:6-8. John also hears a heavenly proclamation of triumph for the faithful from among the Gentiles of "every nation and tribe and tongue and people." They are admonished to worship only the true God if they would escape the doom which threatens Rome, whose dominion extends so widely over the earth. The traditional wickedness of Babylon, long since fallen into ruins, furnishes John suggestive imagery for his veiled references to Rome—this great new "Babylon" whose doom is sealed.

Eleventh day.—Read 14:9-13. Doom is pronounced not only upon Rome but upon all those inhabitants of the empire who follow the current practice of worshipping the ruler. The consuming fire of divine wrath will inevitably overtake all who yield to these blasphemous customs. They will suffer eternal torments, while Christians who remain faithful even unto death, if need be, will inherit rich blessings.

Twelfth day.—Read 14:14-16. The next picture depicts impending doom still more vividly. The sickle suggests the reaper who gathers the harvest, and the image of one like unto a son of man suggests that the harvest is to be garnered by the powers of heaven, who have already exhibited their superiority by casting Satan and his companions down to earth. This victorious power of heaven is soon to be manifested upon earth, "for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

Thirteenth day.—Read 14:17-20. The next picture is designed to heighten the effect still further. The sickle is supplemented by the fire, the typical element

of destruction. When the wicked are gathered like a harvest of grapes, they will be trodden underfoot by the cavalry of heaven until the horses wade breast deep in the blood of the slain. These pictures are all suggestive of the final destruction awaiting the demonic powers that have been despoiling the earth with especial vigor since their ejection from heaven. They, and all the people who side with them, are destined for destruction.

VII. VISIONS OF THE SEVEN ANGELS OF DESTRUCTION

Fourteenth day.—§ 26. *Preparations in heaven.* Read 15:1-4. From giving a general description of the impending wrath of God, John now proceeds to particulars as exhibited in the work of the seven angels who are to smite the earth with the seven final plagues expressive of the divine wrath. But before entering upon this description a picture is given of the heavenly preparation for these impending calamities. One purpose of this parenthetical picture is to encourage Christians to endure with confidence the afflictions of the last days. The glory of those who have refused to worship the beast, and their song of praise, are designed as a guaranty of the triumph of the faithful.

Fifteenth day.—Read 15:5-8. Next the seven angels equipped with the seven plagues are seen emerging from the temple in heaven. They are gloriously adorned and are given portions of the divine wrath pictorially represented in liquid form so that it may be cast upon such earthly objects as are to be destroyed. In these preparations special stress is laid upon the glory and the power of God, who is now about to execute judgment upon the wicked earth.

Sixteenth day.—§ 27. *Manifestations of divine wrath.* Read 16:1-7. After the seven angels receive their full commission, they perform in turn the destructive task assigned them. The first plague is in the form of bodily affliction for those who have submitted to the worship of the emperor. The second affects the waters of the sea, turning them to blood and causing all the fish to die. When the third plague is liberated, all rivers and springs are similarly affected. This picture of the waters turned into blood is a very appropriate way of registering God's protest against the innocent shedding of the blood of saints and prophets by the wicked Roman authorities. The righteousness of this act of God is admitted even by the guardian angel of these waters—for the ancients usually thought of the sea, the rivers, and the springs as under the constant care of guardian spirits, while moderns ascribe the motion of the waters simply to the impersonal laws of gravity.

Seventeenth day.—Read 16:8-11. The fourth plague consists in an increase of the sun's heat, for which the wicked curse God in their distress instead of turning to him in repentance. Still greater agony overtakes the rulers when the fifth plague is released, smiting with destruction the imperial throne. Writhing in their agonies sinners blaspheme God, but show no inclination toward repentance.

Eighteenth day.—Read 16:12-16. In the picture of the sixth plague John sees a representation of the preparation for the final assembling on earth of all the demonic hosts. This army of Satan includes mythical kings from the East, along with all the demonic broods that have been bred by the great dragon and his earthly representatives, the Roman imperial power and the imperial cult. All these forces are seen assembled at the fabled Har-Magedon of Jewish legend ready to give battle to the hosts of heaven.

Nineteenth day.—Read 16:17-21. In the picture of the last plague the destruction of the present world is portrayed. The atmosphere becomes the final agent of divine wrath, and the great day of God bursts upon the forces of evil with overwhelming calamity. The weapons of the Almighty are lightnings, thunders, and earthquakes, which effect a general dissolution of all nature. All cities fall, "Babylon" (Rome) being made the special object of divine wrath. Islands and mountains disappear, and fearful hailstones smite unrepentant sinners with destruction.

VIII. VISIONS OF ROME'S DOOM

Twentieth day.—§ 28. *Rome identified.* Read 17:1-6. John is not content with portraying the seven plagues leading up to the end; the fate of sinful Rome needs to be depicted in even greater detail. He has further visions in which his angelic guide shows him some new pictures. First he sees a portrait of a wicked woman typical of Rome which has spread its power out over all the Mediterranean, teaching its wickednesses to all subordinate nations. The woman is gorgeously attired and seated upon a monstrous beast. She bears upon her forehead an inscription indicative of her iniquity, and she is reveling in the slaughter of the Christians. John is filled with wonder at the strange picture.

Twenty-first day.—Read 17:7-11. The angel who is guiding John in his vision interprets the picture. It is already evident that the woman symbolizes Rome, but what is the meaning of the details in the picture? In the first place, the beast represents a demonic creature which has come up out of the primeval abyss below the earth, and is doomed to final perdition. As he is present in the last times among men he excites the wonder and receives the worship of all who are not Christians. But already he has had a history, in that he impersonates the ruling imperial house with its succession of rulers from the beginning of the empire in 27 B.C. down to the demonic ruler who now holds sway while the fall of Rome is impending. The seven heads of the beast typify both the seven hills upon which Rome was built and the seven rulers of the imperial house. Five of these rulers have already reigned, a sixth is now in power in John's day, a seventh is to hold office for a brief period, and then will come the rule of this beast which John sees in the picture and whose reign will mark the downfall of Rome. Although the beast is the eighth ruler, he is one of the seven who have preceded him; that is,

he is a former emperor no longer alive, but to return to life again for the final act in the drama. In a previous connection we have noted that John regarded the "beast" of the last times as a reincarnation of Nero (§ 24), and the scar on one of his heads (13:3) recalled the fact that Nero had died by plunging a dagger into his own throat.

Twenty-second day.—Read 17:12-15. The ten kings represent a mythical element in the picture having no counterpart in history. When the beast attains to the zenith of his power one hour before the end, he will associate with himself ten subordinate princes, whom John probably thinks of as coming from the distant east when the river Euphrates has been dried up (16:12). The waters in the picture are also explained as representing the vast heathen population of the Roman Empire.

Twenty-third day.—Read 17:16-18. John here sees a new trouble for Rome in the form of civil war, when these subordinate rulers and the last demonic emperor himself shall let loose upon the city their own forces of destruction. In order to make the identification of Rome unmistakably clear, the angel closes his explanations with the statement that the woman is the great city that holds sway over the kings of the earth.

Twenty-fourth day.—§ 29. *Rome's fall described.* Read 18:1-3. The Christians' ardent desire for the destruction of Rome is answered by still another picture exhibited to John in his visions. A mighty angel is seen descending from heaven in order to announce to men that the utter desolation of the wicked metropolis of the Mediterranean world is at hand. This fate is due her as a punishment for her crimes in teaching all the peoples of that world to share in and love her iniquities. The kings of all the nations have yielded to her temptations and the merchants have grown rich catering to her luxurious taste.

Twenty-fifth day.—Read 18:4-8. The climax of Rome's sin, however, is her treatment of the Christians. John hears a voice summoning all Christians to withdraw from the wicked city, lest they be overtaken by the plagues about to fall upon her (chap. 16). She has filled up her iniquities to the limit of God's merciful endurance, and now the divine vengeance is to fall upon her, doubly afflicting her for the cruelties she has imposed upon the Christians. In her pride she boasts of her power, but destruction will come upon her in a single day when God enacts judgment.

Twenty-sixth day.—Read 18:9, 10. Rome's downfall is lamented by the subordinate princes of the empire who have enjoyed safety and prosperity under her protection, sharing also in her wicked luxuries. They are overcome with fear at her collapse, lamenting because of the terrible judgment that God has executed upon her.

Twenty-seventh day.—Read 18:11-17a. In the same picture John sees the merchants of the Mediterranean also weeping over Rome's destruction. She

has been the greatest market of the world where they have sold the wares demanded by the luxurious habits of life in the metropolis. She has purchased from all over the world the most costly gems, the richest raiment, the most handsome ornaments, the most delicate foods, the costliest perfumes, the finest horses and chariots for use upon the race course, the most numerous slaves, and even the very souls of men. But in a single hour all this wealth and luxury come to naught, leaving the host of merchants who have thriven upon this trade to lament the destruction of their wealth.

Twenty-eighth day.—Read 18:17b-20. The fall of Rome is also pictured as a sad blow to the busy shipping interests of the Mediterranean. Practically all of the merchandise handled in the city reached Rome by water. Her destruction spells disaster for every owner of ships and every seaman whose fortune and livelihood depend upon the existence of Rome. In one hour all their business perishes, and they are overcome by lamentation. But heaven and the saints may rejoice since the hour of Rome's doom is the hour of their triumph.

Twenty-ninth day.—Read 18:21-24. As a final portrayal of Rome's downfall, John sees an angel cast a great stone into the sea, where it is completely lost from view in an instant. So shall the great and wicked city vanish from the face of the earth in the day of God's judgment. No trace of life will be discoverable on the site where she formerly stood. Such shall be her doom because of her twofold sin—her luxurious living on the one hand, and her slaughter of the Christians on the other. With such a picture of Rome's disaster John takes leave of this particular phase of his subject.

Thirtieth day.—§ 30. *Summary.* Read through rapidly chaps. 12-18. Observe that John views the trials of the Christians as a direct result of Satan's wrath at being ejected from heaven. Hence the Roman emperor and his officers are the immediate agents of Satan when they demand on pain of death that Christians worship the ruler. But since the ejection of Satan from heaven means that the power of God has already begun its triumphant activity, so Satan's depredations upon earth will soon come to an end through the intervention of God. As the Roman Empire has become the especial agent of Satan for accomplishing his ends, the destruction of the empire is to be the first act in the divine program of judgment. By way of strengthening the Christians' confidence in their hour of present trial John gives detailed descriptions, making it perfectly plain to his readers that wicked Rome is destined for speedy destruction. Christians may expect a brief rule of another emperor (17:10) to succeed the present ruler, then the "beast" will appear ruling for three years and a half (12:6, 14; 13:5), and then Rome will perish from the face of the earth. Since the book of Revelation was written certainly not later than the reign of Domitian (81-96 A.D.), who is thus reckoned as the sixth emperor, John must have expected the downfall of Rome to occur early in the second century A.D. While Christianity gained its

triumph over Rome much more slowly and in a very different way from that anticipated by John, the vivid picture of victory painted by him made his own faith contagious and served admirably to strengthen the endurance of believers in that hour of severe trial. Thus John made a very significant contribution toward the success of the new religion in one of the most precarious moments of its history.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. With what great event in the heavenly world does our writer introduce the visions of chaps. 12-18?
2. What comfort does the author secure from the fact that Satan has been cast out of heaven and down upon the earth?
3. What reflection of conditions in Rome is seen in the vision of the beast and his worshippers?
4. How are the Christians encouraged in their steadfast refusal to worship the emperor?
5. What is the result of their refusal? What is the length of the period of persecution as pictured by the author?
6. How and why does the author connect the emperor Nero with his vision?
7. What are the Christians assured will be the fate of those who do engage in the worship of the emperor, and what contrast will the fate of the Christians offer?
8. Who are the central figures of the series of visions, beginning with chap. 15, and how is the wrath of God pictured?
9. What conception of nature lies back of the visions of the waters in the third plague?
10. Up to what culminating event do all these terrible visions lead?
11. How does the author in his next vision show his familiarity with Roman history and his insight into the degenerating influences at work in the empire?
12. How does he avoid any misunderstanding as to his meaning?
13. In what way does he picture the unconsciousness of danger in Rome itself?
14. Give briefly the features of the picture of the final fall of Rome?
15. What is to be the attitude of the Christians as they witness this wholesale destruction?
16. For what two reasons is Rome to perish thus from the earth?
17. When did the writer of this book expect the pictured destruction to take place?
18. At what time and under what emperor did the Christian conquest of Rome actually occur?
19. How did this portion of the book actually serve the Christian cause at the time of its writing?
20. How does it suggest the fate of unrighteous nations in the modern world?

STUDY IV

IX. VISIONS OF THE END

First day.—§ 31. *Assurances of triumph.* Read 19:1-5. In the immediately preceding chapter John has depicted the utter downfall of Rome. But the triumph of the Christians will not be complete until other foes of Christianity have been destroyed and Satan has been bound. John's visions of successive events in this last act of the drama are yet to be described. The first incident is an assuring picture of the heavenly choir praising God for his glory as demonstrated in the destruction of Rome. To men upon earth her power over the Christians may seem irresistible, but the inhabitants of heaven know that God will fully avenge his suffering saints. By a description of this heavenly scene John once more conveys to his readers the assurance of triumph.

Second day.—Read 19:6-8. The heavenly singers turn their eyes from fallen Rome to the further triumph in store for Christ and his saints. Since God Almighty reigns in heaven the ultimate and complete vindication of the righteous is assured. The consummation is here figuratively described as a marriage between Christ and the Christian group, the latter having become properly adorned for the ceremony by the righteous deeds of the faithful who have endured persecution.

Third day.—Read 19:9 f. By a slight change in the figure just used, the angel who is acting as guide and interpreter for John in his vision speaks of the Christians individually as guests at the marriage feast. His assuring words so impress John that the latter would have worshiped his heavenly guide. The objection raised by the angel becomes a further ground of assurance. Faithful Christians are to think of themselves as standing upon an equal footing with the angels before God. Just as God employs angels to disclose his will, so Christians who bear faithful witness to Jesus in days of persecution have the prophetic spirit within themselves and thus performing upon earth a function quite as honorable as that discharged by the angels in heaven.

Fourth day.—§ 32. *Victory of the heavenly powers.* Read 19:11-13. John is now prepared—and he has prepared his readers—to witness in a vision the final act by which the complete suppression of all Christianity's enemies is to be accomplished. The conquering hero of the occasion is the heavenly Christ, who comes to judge and slay all his foes. He is a terrifying figure. Royally accoutered and

riding upon a white charger, his very glance is like a devouring fire. The ancients firmly believed in the magical power of an unknown name, hence the secret name possessed by Christ added to his unconquerable power. The carnage to follow in his train is foreshadowed by his blood-sprinkled garment, and the designation "Word of God" which he bears identifies him with the highest of heavenly authorities.

Fifth day.—Read 19:14-16. Following this warrior are seen the armies of heaven, also riding upon white horses. But instead of describing these armies John's gaze reverts to the leader, and further details of his portrait are described. The very breath of his mouth is a sword of destruction with which he slays his enemies. As the exponent of God's wrath, he will crush the forces of evil even as grapes are crushed in the winepress. In contrast with heathen princes and potentates, he is king of kings and lord of lords.

Sixth day.—Read 19:17 f. So overwhelming will be the victory that an angel is seen summoning the birds of prey to assemble for a feast upon the bodies of the slain. No honors of burial will be permitted to the dead even though they are kings and high officials. Carrion birds will prey without discrimination upon men of high and low degree, as well as upon the flesh of the horses.

Seventh day.—Read 19:19-21. Next John sees a picture of the conflict and its outcome. The enemies arrayed against Christ and his heavenly hosts are the "beast" who had survived the destruction of Rome and earthly kings with their respective armies. The victory is overwhelming. First, punishment is meted out to the beast and his priest, whose great crime has been that of persecuting Christians for refusing to worship the emperor. These two demonic powers are consigned to a place of torture in the fiery lake of burning brimstone. A second item is sudden slaughter of all other foes by Christ himself, apparently without the assistance of the heavenly hosts who followed in his train.

Eighth day.—Read 20:1-3. The last act in this final victory of the powers of heaven is the binding of Satan. Ever since his ejection from heaven he has been afflicting mortals, but now even his terrestrial activities are at an end. John sees a picture showing the descent of an angel especially commissioned to bind Satan and cast him into the lowest regions, called the abyss. This place in the lower regions is to be distinguished from the burning pit where the beast and his priest are confined. With Satan cast into the abyss and the entrance firmly sealed, the source of all evils in the world has been finally eliminated. Apparently John believes that there are distant heathen nations still upon the earth, but they dwell in parts so remote that they have not participated in the recent conflict. And since Satan is bound, there is no evil power left to incite them against Christ and his companions. This evil work will be undertaken by Satan a thousand years hence, but for the present the Christians' troubles are at an end.

Ninth day.—§ 33. *The millennium.* Read 20:4-6. John now describes his vision of the coming reign of Christ upon earth for one thousand years. This new régime is introduced by the first judgment when the faithful appear to receive their reward. First, all martyrs who have fallen in the persecutions are raised to participate in the blessings of the millennium. A similar privilege awaits all living Christians who have refused to worship the emperor. But the rest of the dead, whether righteous or wicked, are not raised at this time. Only the Christian martyrs participate in the "first resurrection" as pictured by John. During the millennium Christ and his saints dwell in Jerusalem, all possessing the dignity of princely rulers and assured that they have nothing to fear from the final judgment to follow after the one thousand years have passed.

Tenth day.—§ 34. *The last conflict.* Read 20:7 f. A brief period of distress is depicted following the millennium. Satan has been released from his abyssmal prison and undertakes again his characteristic work of inciting the heathen to hostility against Christians. This time he seeks out distant nations, persuading them to assemble their numberless hosts to make war upon Christ and the saints dwelling in Jerusalem.

Eleventh day.—Read 20:9 f. The outcome of this last conflict is decisive and comprehensive. Fire from heaven utterly destroys all the hostile heathen. Now no one is left upon earth except Christ and his companions. Satan's career is brought to a close when he is cast into the burning pit to suffer eternal punishment along with the beast and his prophet, who have already spent a thousand years in torture.

Twelfth day.—§ 35. *Final judgment.* Read 20:11 f. The last item in the triumph of the heavenly powers is shown in a picture of the final judgment. God is seen seated upon a white throne, a terror to all who dwell in heaven or upon earth. But no one is able to escape. All the dead are revived in order to receive judgment according to their deserts as recorded in the heavenly books. The names of the righteous are recorded in the "book of life," and the wicked are listed in separate books.

Thirteenth day.—Read 20:13-15. The resurrection is comprehensive. It includes all heathen, all Jews, and all Christians except those who have been associated with Christ during the millennium. Those who have perished in the sea are restored to life, and those who have been dwelling in the lower regions held in the grip of the monsters called "death and hades" are liberated. Then judgment is passed upon all creatures, Christ and the millennial saints alone excepted (20:5 f.). The monsters "death and hades" are disposed of first, receiving their portion in the lake of fire. In ancient times it was believed that the death of men was the result of action by demonic powers who carried their victims off to the lower world. With these malevolent agents eternally condemned to the burning pit, the power of death would be completely broken (see also I Cor. 15:24 f.).

Judgment upon risen mortals then proceeds to its conclusion, the wicked being cast into the fiery pit while the righteous are saved for participation in the blessings of the new world exhibited to John in his next vision.

X. VISIONS OF THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH

Fourteenth day.—§ 36. *Announcement of the new age.* Read 21:1-4. John is permitted to gaze upon a magnificent picture of the new world where the righteous are to reside throughout eternity. A new city made in heaven is to be let down upon the earth, now completely renovated. The seer hears an angelic voice announce that God himself is to abandon his dwelling-place in heaven and take up his residence upon earth among the saints in their new Jerusalem. The new city is to be a perfectly ideal abode, entirely free from all forms of distress experienced by the inhabitants of the former Jerusalem. No one will die, no one will mourn, nor will any pain afflict the saints.

Fifteenth day.—Read 21:5-8. The announcement of the coming age of blessing is repeated in John's hearing by God himself. He assures the seer that all things are to be renewed, and this word of assurance is to be communicated to the Christians who are now suffering the agonies of persecution. When announced by the Almighty the outcome is so certain that it may be regarded as virtually a present reality. Those who remain faithful in the present hour of trial will ultimately be admitted into the very presence of God, where they shall quench their thirst at the fountain of living water and enjoy the full privileges of sons of God. On the other hand, those who draw back with fear in the hour of trial, those who refuse to believe in Christ, and all sinners are destined for the lake of fire.

Sixteenth day.—§ 37. *Description of the new Jerusalem.* Read 21:9 f. A special messenger comes to John in his vision and leads him into another picture gallery where he sees the new Jerusalem that is to be let down from heaven upon earth when the time for the end of all things arrives. While "in the Spirit" John is permitted to see from a mountain in heaven this magnificent picture of the new Jerusalem in order that he may reproduce it for the encouragement of his suffering brethren.

Seventeenth day.—Read 21:11-14. As described by the seer, the new city is brilliantly lighted, emitting a radiance which is nothing less than the dazzling splendor of God. Its brilliance resembles that of the most precious gem imaginable. It is surrounded by a high wall with twelve gates guarded by angels—one entrance for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. These gates are distributed equally on the four sides of the city. The fundamental position of the Christians is indicated by the twelve conspicuous foundation stones upon which the names of the twelve apostles are inscribed.

Eighteenth day.—Read 21:15-17. The perfection of the new city is revealed in its measurements, all of which are multiples of the sacred number twelve.

Being equal in length, breadth, and height, the city forms a perfect cube, measuring 12,000 furlongs—that is, over 1,400 miles on each side. When men become as angels the seer feels no incongruity in supposing that they may ascend 1,400 miles in air as easily as they travel the same distance horizontally. The wall which measures scarcely 240 feet seems ridiculously low in comparison with the height of the buildings, but we must remember that there were no enemies to attack this city, nor did the seer feel under any compulsion to make the city's measurements conform to earthly architectural standards. In fact the farther visionary experiences deviated from commonplace things of earth the greater was their significance likely to be. But in order that his readers may have a definite notion of the size of the city, John assures them that the standard of measurement employed by the angel was the same as that commonly used among men.

Nineteenth day.—Read 21:18-21. The names of precious stones and metals are used to describe the magnificence of the city's ornamentations. Gems were set in the foundation stones of the walls, each gate was a gigantic pearl, and the streets were paved with gold so fine that it was transparent like glass.

Twentieth day.—Read 21:22 f. John is struck by the absence of any temple in this picture of the new Jerusalem. But with both God and Christ dwelling in daily association with men no building for formal worship was necessary. The need for natural luminaries was also eliminated. The rays of light streaming forth from God and Christ made both sun and moon superfluous.

Twenty-first day.—Read 21:24-27. The city is populated by the redeemed from every nation. Apparently various converted gentile nationalities still retain their identity and reside in different regions of the new earth. But the gates of the city are always open to receive these visitors who come hither to give glory and honor to God. But none of the wicked, who have been consigned to the burning pit, shall ever find their way into the sacred precincts of the new Jerusalem. It can be entered only by those whose names are found written in the book of life when opened on the day of final judgment.

Twenty-second day.—Read 22:1 f. Among the blessings of the city is a wonderful river flowing from beneath the throne of God and of Christ. From this river the righteous will be permitted freely to quench their thirst (21:6; 22:17). A marvelously fruitful tree provides twelve varieties of food for the saints. This is a much higher privilege than that enjoyed in the first Paradise, where man was forbidden to eat of the tree of knowledge. The very leaves of the tree that grows in the new Jerusalem have medicinal properties capable of increasing the blessedness of the peoples who come under its protection.

Twenty-third day.—Read 22:3-5. John concludes his description of the wonderful city by emphasizing its perfection. It will not contain any accursed thing, and there will dwell God and Christ ministered to by the saints. They are permitted to look directly upon the face of God and to have his name inscribed

upon their foreheads. Perpetual day shall prevail, since the radiance emanating from God never ceases; and in his presence the redeemed shall reign eternally.

XI. CONCLUSION

Twenty-fourth day.—§ 38. *Final instructions to John.* Read 22:6-9. The seer has viewed the last picture in the great art gallery of heaven, whither he had been transported "in the Spirit" in order that he might receive a message of cheer for his persecuted fellow-Christians (see especially 1:1-3, 10 f., 19). But before his spirit descends from the heavenly regions he receives a series of impressive injunctions, probably spoken by Christ. He is assured that his visions of coming deliverance are not illusory and that these things "must shortly come to pass." John believes that he has been equipped to utter the infallible predictions of a true prophet when he reports Christ as saying, "Behold, I come quickly." Those who accept this conviction of the seer and look for the speedy advent of Christ to bring an end to the persecution are declared to be blessed. John here repeats what he has previously said about his own equality with his angelic guide (19:10)—a further witness to the alleged reliability of his message.

Twenty-fifth day.—Read 22:10-12. The end is believed to be so near that John's prophecy is not to be sealed up for use at some distant date. It applies to conditions as they exist at the time of writing and offers a solution to be realized within a few years. In the present crisis eternal destinies are being determined by the conduct of men. Those who remain faithful to Christ in these trying days are soon to receive their reward, while those who refuse to believe on him are sealing their own doom. The opportunity to change one's status is almost at an end, for the advent of Christ, determining final destinies, is near at hand.

Twenty-sixth day.—Read 22:13-15. The determining character of Christ's impending advent is again asserted, with the solemn declaration that his power is comprehensive, embracing the beginning and the end of all things. Those who follow him in purity will be entitled to the heavenly rewards previously described, but all sinners will be cast out together, their ultimate destiny being consignment to the burning pit.

Twenty-seventh day.—Read 22:16 f. The instructions to John close with a mighty declaration of Christ's speedy coming. All thought in heaven is centered upon this occurrence, and people upon earth are admonished to prepare for this climactic event. Jesus is said to reaffirm that he has provided angelic guidance for John in order that the latter may communicate the true message of comfort to the churches. The heavenly Spirit which inspires the prophets and the personified new Jerusalem previously designated the "bride" (21:9) reiterate the hope of Jesus' coming, and the same refrain is to be taken up by the readers of the book. Over against Christ's coming the thirsty and needy are invited to come into the Christian fold, where they will secure for themselves a sure salvation.

Twenty-eighth day.—§ 39. *Final exhortation of John.* Read 22:18-21. In closing his book the author speaks a few words of admonition on his own account. His conviction of the accuracy of his visions is so strong that he believes eternal destinies will be determined by the attitude readers take toward his interpretation of history. Doubtless there were Christians in his own day who were far less sure that the end was imminent and who thought the seer overconfident in his predictions. But the hope of a speedy return of Christ has taken possession of him so completely that he believes those who disagree with him will be denied a place in the new Jerusalem. After solemnly affirming again that Jesus promises an early return, the seer closes his book with the fervent prayer, "Come Lord Jesus."

Twenty-ninth day.—§ 40. *Summary.* Read through the paragraph headings §§ 1-39, noting particularly the general outline of the book. Observe that the trying position of the persecuted Christians in western Asia Minor furnished the specific occasion which prompted John to write. In the midst of those stirring events his own faith in the triumph of God's cause expressed itself in the form of wonderful visions depicting the course of events by which suffering Christians were to be given early and complete release from their troubles. The days of the present evil order are thought to be rapidly drawing to a close and an early return of Christ is to usher in a new order. Such was John's conviction as expressed in his visions seen during the hours of ecstatic meditation while he was "in the Spirit" upon the lonely island of Patmos. After a few words addressed to the Asiatic churches threatened by the persecution, admonishing them to holy living in preparation for Christ's coming, the seer sets forth a series of pictures describing the days of coming distress to be followed by a glorious triumph for the saints. In painting these word-pictures doubtless John employed much imagery with which he was already familiar in earlier works of this type, such as Daniel and Enoch. But these figures and images were all used to impress upon his readers what the author believed to be very real impending events. The persecutions were to continue for perhaps a dozen years longer; then Rome was to fall, all hostile earthly powers were to be suppressed, Satan was to be bound for a thousand years, a period of brief tribulation was to follow the millennium, and at last final judgment would be enacted and the new Jerusalem established upon earth. The beginning of the new era would be the return of Christ to set up the millennium, and the author most emphatically affirms that this stage in the program is to be reached very soon. The time is at hand; the advent of Christ is imminent (1:3, 7 f.; 3:11; 22:7, 10, 12, 20).

Thirtieth day.—§ 41. *Present-day use of Revelation.* History has disclosed the fact that the seer was overzealous in declaring that the Christians were soon to be relieved of their troubles by the early return of Christ. Time has shown that God intended that Christians should secure their triumph over the persecutor in a much more gradual and less spectacular manner, and by much more aggressive

action on their own part. In view of this outcome of history, how is the Book of Revelation to be used at the present time?

The present-day reader must choose between three typical ways of using the book. One way may be called the *futuristic*. That is, the message of the book is not linked up with the author's own situation, nor is it interpreted in terms of the vital experiences of himself and his readers. On the contrary, it is made to refer to far-off future events still unrealized after the lapse of more than eighteen centuries. This interpretation requires that we practically ignore John's anxiety about his fellow-sufferers, or else we must believe that he thought to cheer his contemporaries with the promise of a deliverance to be effected some two thousand years or more after they were dead. More serious still, John's explicit references to the worship of the emperor, the downfall of Rome, and the early return of Christ have all to be greatly distorted or tacitly ignored when the futuristic method is followed. It is said that John did not expect the end of the world early in the second century A.D., but he expected it early in the twentieth. Yet if it does not occur at this time, then he had in mind a still later date—and so his meaning is to be reinterpreted with each new decade of delay in Christ's return.

The second chief method of interpretation is the *allegorical* or "spiritual." This method assumes that John did not intend his statements to be taken literally. Beneath his language there was a figurative or hidden meaning. His book is to be read as one would read Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, or Milton's *Paradise Lost*. If this is true, it is a mistake to suppose that John expected the concrete events described in his vision to be realized in actual history. We are asked to believe that he deliberately used these pictures to symbolize much less spectacular events to occur throughout the long course of many future years. Accordingly, Christ's coming might mean his spiritual indwelling within believers, and John's vision of the new Jerusalem would be a symbolic way of predicting the gradual triumph of the church. Thus the seer stands quite above the real storm and stress of his own day, viewing history through the eyes of subsequent generations. While the *futurist* transplants John's literalism into subsequent times, the *allegorist* injects into John's language a hidden or figurative meaning suitable to later ages. Both similarly ignore John's vital connection with the experiences of his own age, and seek by their respective interpretations to make his words fit subsequent conditions. The futurist expects the institution of a new set of circumstances that will measurably conform to John's language; the allegorist makes John's language conform to present notions.

A third method of interpretation is the *historical*. Its point of departure is neither the future nor the present, but the past; that is, the actual world and circumstances of the author's own day. This is the method which has been employed in the present course of study.

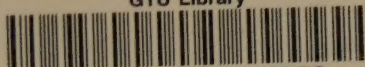
When the Book of Revelation is studied in this historical way, what value has it for us of today? This method of interpretation does not permit us to regard John as primarily a wild theorist or a vague allegorist. To be sure, he theorizes about the end of the world and he often uses imagery and symbols whose meaning may seem obscure and fanciful to us. But when we recognize that these notions were simply current ways of expressing religious convictions in primitive times, we may the more easily discard these outgrown ways of thinking without losing our appreciation of the aspirations and ideals of the Christian heart that beats beneath these ancient garments of overzealous hopes and extravagant language. The failure of John's eager expectation of Christ's speedy return is quite secondary to his mighty faith in God, without which his ecstasy and visions would have been impossible. It is John's loyalty in the hour of affliction, his contagious faith, and his inspiring devotion to the Christian cause that make the reading of his book worth while today. If we of the twentieth century, in meeting our peculiar problems, have been inspired to emulate his faith in the triumph of righteousness and his devotion to the cause of Christ, we will not have read his book in vain. The solutions which he proposed for his special problems—solutions that served well the needs of his day—will not meet our necessities; but a sincerity and consecration like his will prove a most valuable asset for us as we devise new and more appropriate means of meeting issues characteristic of our times.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Recalling the terrors of the visions of chap. 18, describe the change of scene with which chap. 19 opens.
2. What person now appears as the agent of destruction of the enemies of the Christians?
3. How does the author give the crowning touch of ignominy to his picture of the death of the opponents of the riders upon the white horses?
4. Why did the vision of the binding of Satan for a thousand years comfort the Christians of John's day?
5. How does the "first resurrection" which the author describes differ from the second or final resurrection?
6. Name some of the wonders of the new Jerusalem which John sees in his vision.
7. What does this description mean to you?
8. Why was no temple necessary in this new city?
9. Who was to dwell in the city?
10. How does the description of the city suggest that the writer had in mind the story of the Garden of Eden and sought to show his vision superior to it?
11. How does the author now emphasize the importance of belief in the meaning of his visions?

12. Why was immediate decision important to his hearers?
13. What authority does John claim for his admonitions?
14. Give here an outline of the book which is the result of your work.
15. Would those who first read this book be most encouraged by the specific character of the visions or by the assurance of the *immediateness* of the destruction of Rome and the return of Jesus?
16. Rome fell. Christ did not return. Does this mean that John was not a true prophet? What is a prophet?
17. What is the great contribution of this book to Christian inspiration?
18. Which of the three methods of interpreting the book have you decided to accept for yourself?
19. Give your reasons for this decision.
20. Has the Book of Revelation through this study become more or less valuable to you as a part of the Christian message? Why?

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